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SOVIET PROPAGANDA

Some General Observations

INTRODUCTION: The following observations are based primarily on a study of Soviet radio propaganda during the three and a half years between May 1947 and December 1950 by the Special Reports Branch of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. The descriptive generalizations are composite judgments, concurred in by two or more analysts in FBIS.

Strictly speaking, the generalizations apply to radio propaganda only. There is, however, apparently a close similarity between Soviet radio and Soviet press material-- a similarity so close that it would be misleading to speak continually about Soviet radio propaganda, as if it were something separate and distinct. There is also some reason to think that Communist word-of-mouth propaganda throughout the world is based largely on the "official line" as transmitted by radio from Moscow, so that the generally uniform or monolithic character of Soviet propaganda appears here also. We will therefore make the tentative assumption that what is true of Soviet radio propaganda is also true of Soviet propaganda in general. This will do no harm if the reader is aware of the fact that, although our generalizations rather definitely apply to the radio, they apply only tentatively to other media.

A. GOALS

Soviet propaganda apparently attempts two basic tasks which are somewhat different psychologically: to consolidate the adherence of persons who are already in the Communist camp, raising it if possible to the pitch of Communist fanaticism, and, on the other hand, to detach from the Western camp as many as possible of its more lukewarm members. These two purposes differ qualitatively, since the detachment of persons from the Western camp does not need to involve any pro-Soviet alignment; it is enough if the Western camp is merely disunited and if certain parts of it are, for example, unwilling to send troops to fight in Korea. Moscow has scored a victory if it can simply increase neutrality, sentiment, or anti-American sentiment, in individuals or governments which would otherwise follow American leadership.

To a large extent these two goals, consolidation and neutralization, require identical propaganda techniques. Both are served, for example, by painting "Wall Street" in the blackest of colors, and both are served by picturing the Soviet Union as the bulwark of peace and democracy. To some extent, however, they call for different emphases. The lukewarm Westerner, for instance, may be repelled by uncritical personal adulation of Stalin, while the convinced Communist will not; the nationalist Frenchman who is already suspicious of both "Wall Street" and the Kremlin may be receptive to denunciation of Wall Street and not receptive to praise of the Kremlin. A basic question in the analysis of Soviet propaganda, then, is the question of which of these two ultimate goals is primary in Moscow's own thinking.

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A first superficial impression of Soviet propaganda would perhaps point toward consolidation as the primary goal. Its bludgeoning tactics and its gross distortions seem manifestly ill-adapted to the task of winning good will toward the Kremlin, or intellectual acceptance of its premises, in the mind of a skeptical fence-sitter. One wonders how a person with even a minimum of objectivity could possibly be impressed. It is easy to conclude that the propaganda is not directed toward the fence-sitter at all, but toward amateur Communists who must be transformed as fast as possible into fanatical and disciplined professionals. It is possible, however, that this impression is based largely upon our difficulty in bridging the great gap between our whole outlook and that of the Soviet propagandist. It is perhaps difficult for us to appreciate how reasonable his premises seem from his point of view. He may be trying, according to his lights, to adapt his propaganda to the psychology of the fence-sitter, and he may even believe that it is adapted to the psychology of the fence-sitter. (Whether he is correct in this belief is a different question. We ourselves may be deluded if we assume that the fence-sitter shares our own profound skepticism toward all of the major Soviet themes.)

A more thorough examination of the relevant data does, in fact, tend to support the hypothesis that neutralization is at least equal to consolidation in its importance in Soviet eyes. The relevant data include the following:

- (1) The proportion of denunciation of Wall Street and its "lackeys" is very much higher, in Soviet propaganda beamed to foreign audiences, than the proportion of Soviet self-approval. The approach is far more offensive than defensive. This applies especially to personal adulation of Stalin; it is much less frequent in broadcasts to foreign audiences than in broadcasts to domestic audiences or in the Soviet press. This is just what would be expected if Moscow propagandists reasoned that their uncommitted Western listeners would be more receptive to anti-American than to pro-Communist or pro-Soviet propaganda.
- (2) The strategy of neutralization, or of divide-and-conquer, is one which Stalin himself has employed repeatedly, both in his progress toward power within the Politburo and in his international alignments. He has also expressed it clearly and explicitly in his article "Three Slogans on the Peasant Problem" (PROBLEMS OF LENINISM, 1937 edition, pp.). In this important paper he analyses each step in the revolutionary process in terms of four varying elements: immediate objectives, enemies, allies, and neutrals. The questions are: What can we now accomplish? Who are our enemies? Who are our allies? And whom can we neutralize?
- (3) The appeal to non-Communist Westerners has been direct and explicit, within Communist propaganda itself, since the new phase of the "peace campaign" which began with the publication of the Stockholm Appeal in March 1950. The Appeal addresses itself not to "the democratic camp," but to "men of good will" throughout the world, "regardless of their religious beliefs or political convictions." And, similarly, the Manifesto adopted at the Second World Peace Congress in Warsaw stresses the desire of all peoples to maintain peace "despite divergent viewpoints."
- (4) The peace campaign is only the most conspicuous illustration of a tendency which has characterized Soviet propaganda since the beginning of the Popular Front policy in 1934-35: a tendency to play down what is specifically Communist, or even what is specifically socialist, in its propaganda platform, and to concentrate on universally or almost universally approved values such as peace, democracy, and anti-imperialism. The word "revolution" is rarely heard on Moscow's foreign beans, and the term "dictatorship of the proletariat," which Stalin himself has described as the core of Leninist doctrine, is even more rare. The propaganda contest is no longer an ideological one, in the sense that Moscow is preoccupied with establishing the superiority of its own Communist brand of socialism over other brands, or even in the sense that it devotes much effort to proving the necessity of the common ownership of the means of production, or any other clearly defined meaning of the word "socialism." Rather, the contest has become a power contest, or a purely political contest, in the sense that all of the universally-accepted virtues are continually ascribed to one political power group, the USSR and its allies, while all of the

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universally-condemned vices are attributed to its capitalist (and non-capitalist) enemies. In other words, Moscow seems to have gone all out--within the limits of its own perspective--to conceal its revolutionary socialist ideology and to appeal to non-socialist and non-revolutionary elements throughout the world. It is apparently trying (with methods which are in some respects perhaps misguided) to appeal to the fence-sitters and to the lukewarm Westerners fully as much as to those who are already on the pro-Soviet side of the fence.

This last consideration brings up also another noteworthy characteristic of Soviet propaganda strategy: its concentration on tasks other than changing the basic goals or values of the listeners. A fundamental in present Soviet assumptions about human nature (whether it is explicit or only implicit in the thinking of Soviet strategists) appears to be the assumption that the deeper goals and values of human beings are relatively unchangeable. It seems to be assumed that nearly all men (all, that is, except the devils in human form who inhabit Wall Street or who are the servile lackeys of Wall Street) want pretty much the same things: peace, democracy, national independence, economic welfare. Moscow leaves these goals untouched and, instead of trying to modify them, seeks instead to modify its listeners' beliefs about how these goals can be attained or about who is likely to help in attaining them.

And even the how is subordinated to the who. There is almost no practical discussion of the adaptation of means to ends. Like Hitler (and unlike Churchill or Roosevelt), Soviet propagandists confine themselves almost entirely to painting a sort of dream-picture, a mythology of gods and devils in which the gods are always in the "democratic camp" and the devils are always in the "imperialist camp." The how is implicit, but only implicit, in the who. The explicit message is that "the Soviet Union is heading the camp which is struggling for peace and democracy"; and the implicit message is, "If you want peace and democracy you must join the Soviet camp."

B. METHODS

If we examine more narrowly the methods by which Moscow attempts to establish in its listeners' minds the "dream-picture" mentioned above, we find that all of these methods seem to be predicated upon certain further psychological assumptions. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that either the assumptions or the methods are explicit in the minds of Soviet propagandists. As Inkeles has pointed out ("Public Opinion in Soviet Russia," pp 24-5), the published writings of Soviet propagandists are extremely unpsychological and seemingly oblivious of problems of method. "In the Soviet literature on public opinion and in the practical journals and handbooks for propagandists and agitators, surprisingly little attention is given to problems of method; the importance of content is stressed infinitely more than questions of how, by what devices and mechanisms, one can influence attitudes and change opinions." This non-psychological approach is, as we will see later, probably a major reason for the inflexible, monolithic character of Soviet propaganda, and perhaps a major element of vulnerability in the contest with Western propagandists who are at least capable of using all the resources of modern experimental psychology and of an empirical, experimental approach to the specific psychological problems of East-West propaganda. The probably implicit character of Soviet psychological assumptions, however, does not mean that these assumptions do not exist. It only means that we must infer the propagandist's assumptions from what he actually does.*

The assumptions appear to be those of a simple associationism. They are the assumptions one might expect to find in the country of Pavlov, who trained dogs to associate the sound

* Domestic broadcasts have sometimes explained to agitators that they must be clear and interesting, must use local examples, must draw the listener into the discussion by using a question-and-answer technique, etc. This type of common-sense psychology, however, probably does not constitute an important exception to the generalization made above; there are no indications of use of "depth" psychology or of experiments on propaganda as such.

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of a bell with the experience of being fed, so that they salivated at the sound of a bell. They are perhaps also the assumptions one might expect to find in the minds of the new Russian elite, which greatly values machine-like conformity in its followers, which avows a materialist philosophy, and which has rejected, with equal vigor, the psychologies of Freud and of Dostoevski. The result is a psychology without depth, focusing on those superficial mental processes which are actually similar to those of the dog who learns to associate a bell and food.

In Soviet propaganda the bell consists of words such as "Soviet," the food consists of words such as "democracy," and the dog is the listener. By sheer incessant repetition, the dog presumably comes to associate the two terms, so that when he thinks "Soviet" he also thinks "democracy." The following example is typical:

"The Second World Peace Congress summed up the results of the self-sacrificing struggle of all peoples of the world against the dark forces of war. The delegates of the Congress have torn the mask off the false peacemongers and have shown to the world who is the real friend and who the real enemy of the people." (Soviet Home Service, November 23, 1950)

Here the words which bring out a sure-fire reaction of dislike and avoidance are "dark," "war," "mask," "false," "monger," and "enemy"; they are here directly associated with the clearly implied hate-object, Wall Street. The words which presumably bring out a favorable reaction are "peace," "self-sacrificing," "peoples," and "friend"; they are associated equally directly with the Soviet-sponsored Peace Congress and therefore with the Soviet Government. The whole process is one of simple association. In the broadcast from which this passage was taken there is no raising of embarrassing or complicated questions such as the available evidence on which side started the war in Korea, or the requisites for effective international control of atomic energy. There is no evidence of concern with the possible existence of latent skepticism in the listener's mind, or of ways of meeting and overcoming such skepticism on its own ground. There is only persistent direct association between what the listener already wants and what the propagandist wants him to want.

The following five characteristics of Soviet propaganda method can all be logically related to the implicit assumption of simple association:

1. Simplicity

In Soviet terminology, what Westerners call "Soviet propaganda" is not propaganda but agitation. The distinction was well expressed by Plekhanov: "A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people." By this definition everything or nearly everything that is said on the radio is agitation, since it is designed to reach "a mass of people"; and by the same token it does not attempt to convey more than "one or a few ideas." Soviet propagandists would agree in this respect with Hitler, who said that in order to be effective "propaganda has to limit itself to a very few points and to use them like slogans until even the very last man is able to imagine what is intended by such a word."

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There is, to be sure, a considerable amount of variety in the concrete illustrations which Soviet broadcasters use to illustrate their major themes. Perhaps the variety of illustrations is enough to preserve the ordinary listener from being bored by the repetitiveness of the major themes themselves. If so, then the simplicity of Soviet propaganda and its single-minded devotion to the one main task must be counted as a source of very great strength. At least it does not suffer from any over-estimation of the mental powers of its listeners. On the other hand, a question may be raised as to whether the Soviet radio does not lose millions of potential listeners by carrying to an extreme the virtue of simplicity. This, like many other questions which will be raised in the following pages, is an empirical question which can only be answered by direct study of the listeners themselves.

2. Uniformity

A closely related characteristic is the monolithic uniformity of the whole Soviet Communist propaganda output. There are sharp fluctuations in the amount of attention paid to particular topics of current interest, but these fluctuations do not ordinarily affect basic themes, and when they occur they tend to affect all media simultaneously. With a few exceptions (which are all the more significant because they are exceptions) the rule of uniformity seems to hold in the following respects: (a) between the major media of propaganda: press, radio, and word-of-mouth; (b) between the Soviet transmitters and Satellite transmitters such as Warsaw and Bucharest; (c) between what is beamed to domestic audiences and what is beamed to foreign audiences; (d) between the various beams or languages within the output to foreign audiences; (e) between official and clandestine Communist stations; (f) between news reports and commentaries, which are much less differentiated than they ordinarily are in the West; (g) between what is said about various national and class groups (as a rule they are all treated as part of the undifferentiated mass of "peoples" which are "struggling for peace"); and (h) between various writers and commentators. With the exception of Ilya Ehrenburg, whose brilliance and lightness of touch are outstanding, most of those whose writings are quoted have somewhat the same solid, hard-hitting, humorless, Stalin-like style. The commentator is semi-anonymous; no commentator is individualized and dramatized as commentators often are in the West.

While the simplicity of Soviet propaganda is probably an element of strength, its uniformity may well be an element of weakness. The general similarity between what is said to different national audiences can be taken as a case in point. It has one important propaganda advantage in that Moscow cannot easily be accused (as Hitler was) of saying one thing to one audience and the opposite to another. The propaganda opponents of the USSR cannot make capital out of any obvious inconsistencies of this sort. Even the few instances of clear beam-differentiation which have been well established are not logical self-contradictions; they are merely marked differences of emphasis. But a real element of weakness may lie in the fact that these differences of emphasis are not more marked and more numerous than they are. Moscow ordinarily adapts itself only grudgingly to the wide actual divergencies between national cultures, religions, historical backgrounds and political systems. The Norwegians, the Turks, the Japanese and the Brazilians hear much the same programs. All brands of listener-psychology seem to be conceived not on the basis of empirical evidence but on the basis of the same standardized two-camps picture of the world and the same standardized Pavlovian propaganda technique.

In fact, one begins to wonder whether this rigid uniformity does not represent a blind spot in the minds of the regimented Soviet propagandists which is comparable with their blind spot in regard to psychology. Anthropology and the infant science of national character apparently interest them as little as psychology does. The term "monolithic," with its connotations of rigidity as well as of strength, seems peculiarly appropriate here. It may well be that in the long run the Soviet propaganda dinosaur will be outdone by smaller but more agile propaganda opponents, who have been schooled not in the dogmas of Stalinist Marxism but in the more truly revolutionary disciplines of empirical and experimental science.

3. Selection and Omission

Another corollary of the associationist assumptions is that the propagandist can decide what current events he will associate with the ideas he wants to uphold or to condemn. If there are economic difficulties in the United States he can repeatedly link the idea of

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Wall Street with the idea of millions hunting for work, while if American business is booming he can simply ignore such issues and concentrate on the "struggle for peace." If the Soviet case on the control of atomic energy is inherently weak, he can simply omit discussion of this issue, and concentrate on presumably safer subjects such as Western rearmament and militarism.

A special and extreme form of selection is the actual manufacturing of propaganda "events" which can then be capitalized propagandistically as if they were ordinary events of the day. Outstanding examples in recent Soviet propaganda are the creation of the German Democratic Republic, the Khabarovsk trial of Japanese bacteriological-warfare scientists, the prolonged world-wide campaign for signatures to the Stockholm Appeal, and, of course, the two great World Peace Congresses in Paris and in Warsaw. Every one of these was given far more publicity than, for example, the Republican gains in the Congressional elections in 1950.

While this necessarily results in a highly distorted general picture, it probably must be ranked among the inevitable, indispensable devices of effective propaganda, and the extensive Soviet use of it is probably to be counted as one of the strongest aspects of Soviet propaganda as a whole.

4. Slanted Interpretation

By associating it with the proper words, almost any event on the face of the globe can be made to look as if it supports the Soviet two-camps mythology. The rules are simple. The American Congress decides nothing; it is the American "monopolists" who decide. The U.N. General Assembly does not vote; it is the U.S.-controlled "mechanical majority" or "obedient majority" which votes. The Soviet delegate to the Security Council does not insist on his veto privilege; he "upholds the principle of unanimity" and the "Charter of the United Nations." Communists rarely do anything or suffer anything; it is usually "the people" or "democratic elements" who do and who suffer. France and the United States do not agree to anything; "lackeys" of Wall Street in the French Government "submit" to U.S. "orders."

While such glib distortion by means of word-selection can be easily ridiculed, it is doubtful whether any ridicule would detract much from the effectiveness of the technique in the mind of a listener who was at the outset even moderately pro-Soviet. To a receptive listener, the slanted Soviet version of facts, presented as if it were a description of the facts themselves, must seem reasonably factual. And, since it contains few demonstrable outright lies, it is proof against any counter-weapon except, perhaps, ridicule. It is therefore probably the most potent, as well as the most constantly used, of all the devices of Soviet propaganda.

5. Unsupported Assertion

We come now, however, to what is perhaps the most vulnerable of all the associationalistic Soviet propaganda methods: the tendency to rely solely upon unsupported assertions or associative word-choice, rather than upon any systematic marshaling of facts, to support the essential point at issue. It is here that the superficiality of the propagandist's psychological assumptions is most apparent. He simply ignores emotional factors such as the latent skepticism of the listener. It is as if he expects to overcome the emotional resistance and logical skepticism of the listener solely by sheer weight of frequent association, rather than by methods specifically adapted to the listener's emotional resistance or to his intellectual doubts. An example will perhaps make the method clear:

"The main object of the U.S. invasion of Korea was the conversion of her territory into a mainland military base for aggression against China and the USSR. The invasion of Korea was the beginning of the implementation of the U.S. plan for the establishment of domination over the whole of Asia." (Soviet Home Service, 23 November 1950)

To a receptive listener this probably would not be a demonstrable lie. It is merely a monstrous leap-in-the-dark, on an absolutely crucial issue, which happens to be wholly untrue. Like most of Moscow's everyday assertions it has a factual starting-point--in this

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case, MacArthur's advance into Northern Korea. But, also like most of Moscow's assertions, its factual support stops at that point. The fact is merely a convenient peg on which to hang a major propaganda theme which is by no means directly implied by the fact, and which is not supported by any other facts whatsoever, yet the propagandist blandly asserts it as if it were one of those self-evident facts which "everyone knows" and which do not need to be proved.

Another conspicuous case in point is the Soviet use of Western rearmament as evidence of aggressive intentions. As a rule the equating of rearmament with aggressive intent is direct and unsupported by further facts or arguments. Occasionally, to be sure, it is supported by an explicit statement that the armaments must be for aggression, because, as "everyone knows," the Soviet Union is incapable of aggression and could not possibly be a cause of genuine fear in Western Europe. But here, at one remove from the starting-point of the discussion, the same device of unsupported assertion reappears as plainly as ever. No facts are given to support the statement that the Soviet Union is incapable of aggression, although this is fully as controversial as the statement that Western arms are for aggressive purposes.

It could be contended that this technique represents one of the strongest aspects of Moscow's approach. Simple assertion of the essential point at issue probably conveys a very strong impression (at least in the minds of uncritical listeners or of listeners who do not hear any opposing version of the facts) that the Soviet generalizations are in fact wholly obvious and not in need of any factual support. To support a conclusion with facts is, perhaps, equivalent to admitting that its truth is not already self-evident. The technique also has the advantage that it makes no demands on the intelligence of the listener; the speaker caters to the mental inertia of the listener by not asking him to weigh or assemble facts.

On the other hand, it could also be contended that, at least in the minds of uncommitted, skeptical, fence-sitting listeners, such dogmatism is peculiarly vulnerable. While perhaps initially effective even with such listeners, it may in the long run be vulnerable to counterattack by a resourceful propaganda opponent who makes contrary statements with equal confidence, who supports them with abundant facts systematically presented, and who repeatedly challenges the Soviet dogmatist to do the same.

C. MEDIA

The tendency to monolithic uniformity which characterizes Soviet propaganda as a whole applies, as has been indicated above, also to the various media in which it appears. There is at least a great deal of similarity between what is said in the Communist press (both inside and outside the USSR) and on the Communist radio (to both domestic and foreign audiences). There is of course a tendency to concentrate on events of interest to the particular audience which is addressed. The USSR press and the domestic Soviet radio programs give heavy stress to Soviet elections, national holidays, economic achievements, the need for greater economic efforts, "criticism and self-criticism," etc.; the Communist press in France discusses especially French affairs; and Moscow radio broadcasts in French discuss French affairs more than those of any other single country. This is of course to be expected. Soviet propagandists have at least some appreciation of the axiom that persons in every country are primarily concerned with their own affairs, or with world affairs which directly concern them. Yet even this type of differentiation is not carried so far as might perhaps be expected. Most of the countries of the world hear much more from Moscow about world affairs in general than they do about their own country. They do not necessarily even hear as much about their own continent as might be expected; previous to the year 1950 Asian listeners heard more about Europe and the USSR than about Asia.

The general similarity between press and radio probably holds for all of the major, constant characteristics which are discussed in this paper, if only for the reason that a very large part of what is broadcast over the radio consists of press reviews (quoting liberally from the pro-Communist press in other countries as well as in the USSR), and of articles drawn from PRAVDA, IZVESTIA, TRUD, the Cominform journal FOR A LASTING PEACE, FOR A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY, and other Communist publications.

Is there a similar uniformity as between either radio or press on the one hand and word-of-mouth propaganda on the other hand? The testimony of persons who have talked with Communists suggests that the uniformity here is equally great, and that the radio is in

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fact a major means of keeping Communists in all countries up-to-date on what they should say about events of current interest. ~~This is one answer~~, incidentally, to those who wonder why the USSR invests as much effort as it does in broadcasts to the United States, where listening is at a minimum. At least one answer, apparently, is that the radio is relied upon to keep American Communists informed, including the editors of the DAILY WORKER. The same consideration constitutes a possible answer to the question of why Moscow's only broadcasts to Southeast Asia are in English and not in Annamese or any other language of the region. The reason may be that some local Communists in each area can be relied upon to understand English, while few local Communists can be expected to know more than one or two of the indigenous languages.

On the other hand, it can be argued that if complete uniformity exists Moscow is overlooking an important opportunity. The very nature of radio propaganda implies that what is said may be overheard by the "wrong" people. Much that might be said to Germans cannot be said on the radio for fear of antagonizing Frenchmen, and much that could be said to the poorest landless peasants cannot be said on the radio without antagonizing landholding peasants or the urban middle class. To some extent the same can be said of any printed material. A face-to-face conversation, however, can be much more specifically tailored to the particular needs and prejudices of the other person.

A probable case in point is the Communist propaganda among the Italian peasants at the time of the 1948 elections. American press correspondents reported that Italian Communists were going among the landless peasants, showing them maps and pointing out to individual peasants exactly what land would be theirs in case the Communists came to power. At the same time, the whole issue of land reform was being given surprisingly little stress in Soviet broadcasts to Italy. It may well be that this radio avoidance occurred in order not to disturb unduly the middle-class persons in Italy who held property of any kind, and who presumably were more likely to own radios than the peasants were. If so, it represents a type of shrewd diversification in methods and media which is out of line with the generally monolithic character of Soviet propaganda. Yet some differences of emphasis in word-of-mouth propaganda are perhaps to be expected even within the monolithic structure. Without directly contradicting in any way the general official line, it is entirely possible for oral propagandists in working-class areas to play up working class appeals for middle-class Party members to play up middle-class appeals, etc.

D. GROUPS APPEALED TO

As has been indicated above, most of the Soviet appeals are to universal or nearly universal values: peace, democracy, national independence, economic welfare. As such, they are calculated to appeal to middle-class persons as much as to the "toiling masses," to workers as much as to peasants, and to religious persons as much as to atheists. In fact, instead of diversifying its appeals to different groups, Moscow seems to have attempted rather consistently to say only those things which would have an appeal to all groups, with the exception of "Wall Street" itself. Whatever might antagonize any group has in general been omitted.

This applies most conspicuously to middle-class groups; the attempt to neutralize them is evident in the extreme soft-pedaling of the old Leninist ideology of revolution and proletarian dictatorship. The word "proletarian" itself has almost disappeared in broadcasts to foreign audiences, and, although the word "worker" is fairly frequent, it is far less frequent than the word "people," which implicitly includes middle class groups. The term "petit bourgeoisie" is even more rare than "proletarian," and no synonym has taken its place. Marx's own openly avowed distrust of the petit bourgeoisie does not appear at all. In other words, the picture presented is one of a capitalist world in which all of the "people"--peace-loving, democracy-loving, ordinary human beings--are oppressed and used as cannon-fodder by a small minority of capitalists, variously known as Wall Street, monopolists, imperialists, etc. It is a class ideology insofar as the line between "people" and monopolists is a class line, but it is not the Marxist or Leninist ideology, in which the proletariat was sharply differentiated from everyone else.

When a list of groups is presented, e.g., in describing those who have a stake in the peace movement, it often includes five components: "workers, peasants, intelligentsia, women, youth." It is noteworthy that at least 99% of the human race is included in this list.

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White-collar groups could be included as either workers or intelligentsia, and even the wives and children of Wall Street magnates are not clearly excluded from the categories of "women" and "youth."

The effort to avoid antagonizing any group also shows clearly in the handling of national rivalries. Moscow does not, as has sometimes been assumed, "exploit existing antagonisms wherever they may be found." On the contrary, it typically ignores all antagonisms which do not coincide rather clearly with the one great cleavage between pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet, friend and foe. Deeply rooted national hostilities, for instance, are usually ignored. This holds for the Jew-Arab conflict, the India-Pakistan conflict, the Italian-Yugoslav conflict over Trieste, the Greek-Turkish antagonism, the Irish-English antagonism, etc. Religious differences also, between Hindu and Moslem, or between Protestant and Catholic, might almost not exist as far as Moscow is concerned; if mentioned at all, they are mentioned as instances of the "divide-and-rule" policy of the imperialists. French and German differences, e.g. over the Ruhr or the Saar, are rarely discussed; a revival of Nazism, but not Germany as such, is presented as a menace to French security. Instead of antagonizing religious persons by preaching atheism, Moscow instead appeals to them on the peace issue, quoting priests and clergymen on the necessity of peace. Instead of antagonizing nationalists by preaching that "the working men have no country," Moscow denounces "cosmopolitanism," and glorifies "national sovereignty" as against the effort of Wall Street to reduce all nations to slavery. But at the same time internationalists are appealed to by laying tremendous emphasis on peace and insisting on Soviet loyalty to the United Nations.

An especially interesting problem in this connection is the handling of the thorny questions of race and of colonial imperialism. The general Western assumption is that Communists lay great stress on both issues. In certain ways and in certain contexts they do. The Negro issue is exploited in broadcasts on internal U.S. affairs, but Wall Street's "persecution of progressives" and its "war hysteria" are much more emphasized. Anti-semitism is almost never mentioned in any context; and, in direct contrast with a current misconception, Moscow has as yet made almost no capital out of the racial issue as such in Korea. For example it did not once, in available broadcasts, notice or condemn the use of the word "gook" by American troops in referring to North Koreans.

As for colonial imperialism, it does constitute probably the chief exception to the generalization that Moscow does not publicize conflicts other than the primary one. This is understandable, since the Chinese Communists in their own opposition to Western "imperialism" have made their conflict coincide closely with that which Moscow considers primary. The word "imperialist" has been a prime favorite in Soviet broadcasts for several years, and it is not infrequently elaborated in terms of specifically colonial imperialism, especially in Asia. Yet even here the effort not to make enemies needlessly is apparent. As a rule only American and sometimes British imperialism has been condemned; the French, Belgians, and Dutch have been let off with surprisingly little condemnation. In broadcasts to France and elsewhere there have been condemnations of the "dirty war" in Vietnam, but the native independence movement in North Africa has been virtually ignored on all beams, and there has been far more stress on the effort of "imperialist" Wall Street to enslave France itself than on the effort of Wall Street's French puppets to enslave Vietnam. In other words, colonial-minded Frenchmen have been given just as little offense as could possibly be managed without abandoning the claim that the USSR supports all liberation movements against all forms of imperialism.

E. MOTIVES APPEALED TO AND VALUES INVOKED

Four of Moscow's major appeals have already been mentioned: peace, democracy, national independence, and economic welfare. It is necessary, however, to expand this list, and also to clarify what the Communists apparently mean to convey by the term "democracy."

There has been much talk in this country about a Soviet definition of democracy which is radically different from our own definition of it. Soviet radio propaganda lends little support to this idea. Although Stalin's writings on the dictatorship of the proletariat and the leading role of the Party do give a conception of democracy which is explicitly somewhat different from that which is current in the West, very little of this finds its way into broadcasts intended for foreign consumption. Instead, the contexts in which the word is used are such as to indicate that Moscow wants to be understood as meaning very much what democracy means in the West, with "government by the people" strongly stressed as well as "government for the people." Even individual liberty, though it is given far less emphasis than in Western writings, is definitely approved of. For example:

"A true democratic nature clearly manifests itself in the Soviet electoral system. The bourgeois constitutions widely advertise freedom of speech, press, meetings, education, and the activities of social organizations. All this, however, remains

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only on paper. In actual fact the people's masses in the capitalist countries cannot make use of these rights because of all sorts of supplementary restrictions. Here is a letter which depicts the American Constitution. It is written by a foreman from San Francisco, Edward Taylor: 'We have freedom of speech, but there is no money to hire a hall for making speeches. We have freedom of the press, but only for those who have the means to own newspapers. We have the freedom to travel about the country, in first class, if one could afford it. ... We have abstract rights, but no material rights.'" (Soviet Home Service, 22 November 1950)

Apart from the smaller stress on individual freedom, the one major difference between the meaning of the word "democracy" as inferred from its usage in Soviet propaganda and as inferred from its usage in Western writings is that Soviet propagandists tend to equate democracy with leftism, or elimination of class exploitation. "The camp of reaction" (i.e., the camp of class exploitation) is often contrasted with "the camp of democracy," as if whatever is in the interests of the exploited classes is by definition democratic. And, in terms of the Soviet world-picture, this is consistent. If the capitalist world is divided into a small exploiting minority and a large exploited majority, and if the exploiters manage by force or fraud to hold the majority in political as well as economic subjection, then almost necessarily a democratic government is one which frees the majority from this bondage. This is in fact the chief form in which the old Marxian ideology still survives. While class appeals in the old direct sense have tended to fade into the background, the more universally acceptable word "democracy" is perhaps designed to make use of all the emotional dynamite in the old "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!"

In addition to the four values mentioned above, at least four others deserve mention: moral values (especially truthfulness), strength, culture, and national unity. Moral values are continually invoked in condemning the "ruling circles" in the West; strength is an attribute often claimed for the "democratic camp" as a whole, the vanguard and bulwark of which is the "mighty" Soviet Union; culture is said to be strangled in the West and cultivated in the East; and national unity is continually invoked in discussions of Germany.

In going over this list, one is struck by its similarity to our own value-system, and to the values stressed in our own propaganda. It seems clear that, as far as values are concerned, there is no "diametric opposition" between their official ideology and our own, such as has sometimes been claimed by Western ideologists. If there is any diametric opposition it lies in purposes which Moscow does not put into words (such as a Politburo determination to dominate the world), or in the beliefs which are held about who are the gods and who are the devils. While the verbally avowed values are strikingly similar, there is of course complete disagreement as to which side represents these values and which side represents their negation.

F. LIES AND DISTORTIONS

We come now to the aspect of Soviet propaganda which has preoccupied Western observers much more than any other: how much does it lie, and how does it lie?

The first answer that has to be given, in order to clarify a very widespread partial misconception, is that Moscow does not continually engage in barefaced, obvious, demonstrable lying. Soviet propagandists are much too shrewd, and have much too firm a grasp of the basic essentials of all effective propaganda, to do anything of the sort.

There have been, to be sure, a few glaring instances of this sort. The one with which the whole Western world is now all too familiar is the claim that South Korea attacked North Korea on 25 June 1950. This is a barefaced and colossal lie, if there ever was one. But it is not, as nearly all Americans have probably assumed it to be, typical of Moscow's everyday propaganda procedure. Perhaps the two outstanding similar instances during the past three years have been the claim, often reiterated even during the past year, that there are 18 million unemployed in the United States, and the claim that the Soviet Union, rather than the Western powers, has stood for "strict international control" of atomic energy. Apart from these, the absolutely clearcut, easily demonstrable lies have been few and far between.

Of course this does not mean that the Communists are basically any more moral than we have assumed them to be, or that they do not have a wholly amoral, cynical, opportunistic attitude toward truth. All it means is that they have a fairly keen and realistic appreciation of the necessity of establishing one's own credibility, in the eyes of one's listeners, if any later propaganda is to be believed. They know that they cannot afford to squander their capital of credibility.

On the other hand, the great element of validity in the common American conception of Soviet lying is the extent of the distortion which is created by Soviet propaganda techniques other

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other than obvious lying. By selection and omission, and by stretching slanted interpretation to the limit, Moscow produces distortions which, at least from our side of the fence, appear to be enormous.

Among these enormous and continually emphasized distortions the following are outstanding:

1. The blurring of distinctions between the Right and the non-Soviet Left. Since the world is pictured as divided into "camps" which are respectively all black and all white, it follows that the enemy camp must be uniformly, monolithically black. But to force the infinitely complicated real world into this crudely simple two-camps pattern involves ignoring or denying many distinctions which are in fact fairly obvious. It involves, for instance, ignoring or denying the difference between capitalists and socialists--a distinction which lies at the heart of Marxism itself, considered as a social ideology--whenever this distinction does not coincide with the line the Soviet Government draws between those who are subservient to it and those who are not. Tito and Wall Street are treated as indistinguishable, except that Tito is the lackey and Wall Street the master. Similarly, Robert Taft is treated as essentially indistinguishable from Norman Thomas, Ernest Bevin, and (now) Henry Wallace.
2. The finding of diabolical motives for everything that an anti-Soviet person does. Since motives are always a matter of interpretation rather than of demonstrable fact, Moscow can indulge in almost unlimited distortion in this field while preserving a certain amount of truthfulness with regard to what its enemies have actually done. Two outstanding examples of this have already been mentioned: the claim that the American advance in Korea meant an intention to conquer Asia, and the claim that Western rearmament has an obviously aggressive purpose.
3. An exaggeration of the extent of pro-Soviet feeling, or of the extent of agreement with Soviet premises, in the non-Soviet world. Western rearmament must be aggressive because, as "everyone knows," the Soviet Union could not possibly be a danger. "The peoples of the world" are protesting against American aggression in Korea. "The peoples of the world" look to the Soviet Union as the mighty bulwark of peace. Continually, in innumerable contexts, Moscow multiplies by a factor of at least 5 or 10 the amount of pro-Soviet sentiment in countries like Britain and the United States where pro-Soviet sentiment is actually relatively very small.

Are such distortions obvious enough, in the minds of relatively neutral, uncommitted listeners, to constitute boomerangs which tend to discredit all Soviet propaganda? If not, could they easily be made obvious by skillful ridicule or other forms of counter attack? Such questions are tempting, but could only be reliably answered by actual investigation of listener-psychology.

G. OMISSIONS AND EVASIONS

Distortion by omission is in general both safer and more effective than distortion by commission. It is not surprising, then, that a very large part of all Soviet distortion is achieved by omission, by near-omission, or by confusing and evasive treatment of those issues on which it is most vulnerable. The usual technique is not total omission, but a combination of minimal attention (just enough to keep ordinary listeners from noticing that the topic is being soft-pedaled) and evasive handling.

Some of the major topics which are avoided in this way are:

1. The actual implementation of world control of atomic energy. Apart from its extremely simple slogan-like demand for "prohibition of the atomic weapon," endorsed allegedly by 500,000,000 signers of the Stockholm Appeal, Moscow has had almost nothing to say on the crucial issue of how this prohibition can be effectively implemented. On the few occasions when it has discussed the matter at all it has strenuously opposed the Baruch Plan as a proposal for management of all atomic facilities by a "U.S. monopoly," but it has scarcely pretended to reconcile this position with the claim that the Soviet Union itself stands for "strict international control," which the Western Powers are obstructing. Such key issues as constant vs. intermittent inspection, and international management vs. mere inspection, are simply not discussed.
2. Individual freedom within the Soviet sphere. With few exceptions, Western charges with regard to slave labor, secret police, forced confessions and other techniques of the police state have not been answered by Moscow. They have simply been ignored.

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3. Discrepancies between present propaganda emphases and basic Bolshevik doctrine. The great shift of emphasis since the days of Lenin has been highly unobtrusive. Moscow has neither admitted it nor tried to justify it. The fiction of monolithic self-consistency and constancy of doctrine in the "democratic camp" remains untouched, except for an occasional mention of how Stalin "developed" the doctrines of Marx and Lenin.

4. Western fear of Soviet aggression, and the historical basis of that fear. With three isolated exceptions, during the past three years, there have been no monitored discussions of or attempts to justify previous Soviet actions in relation to Finland, Poland, Rumania, and the Baltic states. The period of the Nazi-Soviet Pact is a blind-spot in Soviet sketches of recent history, and the period when Soviet troops were in Iran is not recalled.

5. Direct comparisons between living-standards. While economic conditions in the Soviet Union are rather often compared with conditions in the capitalist West, to the detriment of the latter, there are never concrete and direct comparisons in terms of what the ordinary citizen has to eat, what he wears, the kind of house he lives in, etc.

6. Socialism and labor gains in the West. This avoidance follows as a corollary of the "blurring of distinctions between the Right and the non-Soviet Left" which has already been mentioned. To preserve its black-white dichotomy intact, Moscow cannot afford to admit, or to let its listeners think about, the possibility of achieving socialism or social justice by democratic methods and apart from Soviet auspices. The familiar combination of near-omission and evasive handling is therefore applied to such developments as socialized medicine or the controversy over the nationalization of steel in Great Britain.

Since they are negative rather than positive, the probability is that few of these avoidances have been observed by many listeners or have been boomerangs on a large scale. They probably have done little, as yet, to discredit Soviet propaganda even in the eyes of semi-skeptical listeners. But might they become boomerangs if they were repeatedly pointed out by an opponent who repeatedly challenged Soviet propagandists to stand up and face the music? Here again, only actual investigation and experiment can provide the answer.

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H. HYPOTHETICAL DIRECTIVES TO PROPAGANDISTS

A compact way of summarizing much of what has been said above is to formulate a hypothetical set of directives to Soviet propagandists which might conceivably exist, and which would at least be consistent with what they do. Probably nothing very similar to it actually does exist, because, as has been suggested above, Soviet methodological assumptions are probably implicit and un verbalized rather than explicit. Nevertheless, this may represent something like what they would say if they put into words the implicit assumptions on which they operate.

1. Never forget that you are an agitator and not a propagandist. You are not talking to Marxist theoreticians, but to the masses. Be simple; be clear; vary your illustrations continually, but pound, pound, pound on the fundamentals!

(Your immediate listener will of course very often be a Party member, and sometimes a Marxist theoretician, but your job is not to enlighten him theoretically. Your job is to provide him with simple agitational materials which he in turn can use in word-of-mouth agitation among the masses.)

2. Study and imitate the agitational writings of our beloved leader and teacher, the great Stalin! Be, as he is, dignified, forceful, ruthless in exposing the lies and treacheries of the enemies of democracy, and absolutely confident in the ultimate victory of our cause.

3. Concentrate your fire. Our deadly enemy is Wall Street, supported by its docile lackeys throughout the world. We cannot afford to let this mortal enemy employ against us the deluded masses in his own country or the governments of other countries which, because of the contradictions within the capitalist camp, necessarily have latent hostilities to Wall Street. Every member of the petit bourgeoisie, every patriot, every religious person, every member of a non-American government whom we can detach from his subservience to the ruling circles of America represents a victory for the cause of peace, democracy, and Socialism, even though he may be only neutral in the struggle.

At the same time, we must never admit for a moment that neutrality is possible. Actually it is not possible, since there is not and cannot be any middle ground, any "Third Force" between the camp of peace and the camp of war.

4. Do not be distracted by the widely-publicized events, the national rivalries, the puppet-shows (such as elections) in the capitalist world. Wall Street employs them to distract the masses from their true task of struggle for peace, democracy and Socialism; we will be only playing Wall Street's game if we cater to such transient and superficial interests. There is only one real struggle; every fact you use and every comment you make must contribute directly to that struggle.

5. Do not give currency to Wall Street's more plausible lies, even by quoting them or attempting to refute them. And do not let the enemy draw you into a discussion of those issues on which his case has a certain superficial plausibility. Concentrate on issues on which our own case is most obviously strong.

Naturally this avoidance should not be too obvious. Do not let any major event which is uppermost in your listeners' minds go too long without some sort of comment. This is necessary in order not to appear evasive, and it is necessary also in order to give Communists throughout the world a ready answer when they are challenged by their opponents. A Communist should never be without a ready answer to any challenge. But beyond this minimum, any additional attention to certain issues should be carefully avoided. Specifically, give minimal attention to the following issues:

- a. The Baruch Plan for "world" control of atomic energy.
- b. Our methods of dealing with political criminals.
- c. Our basic doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
- d. Alleged instances of Soviet "aggression" or "expansion."
- e. Alleged capitalist superiority in living-standards.
- f. Alleged "socialism" or "labor gains" in the capitalist world.

6. Every word must be a weapon. Do not let your style be infected by the rotten "objectivity," the cosmopolitan "scientific" spirit which is cultivated by Social Democrats, opportunists and pseudo-intellectuals in the capitalist world. Call an imperialist an imperialist, and not a "Congressman"; call an incendiary of war an incendiary of war, and not a "businessman" or "an opponent of the Soviet Union." To refrain from tearing the mask from the face of a pseudo-neutral enemy is to play into his hands.

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7. But, at the same time, let facts speak for themselves. The facts of capitalist oppression and aggression are wholly obvious; they do not need to be "proved," but must simply be kept in the forefront of the listener's mind. And since the facts are obvious, we do not need to give the false impression that we ourselves, the agitators who convey the facts, are trying to "influence" our listeners. Our manner should not be emotional, and the directly agitational style of May Day slogans should be avoided. There should be nothing in our style or manner which distracts the listener from complete concentration on the one essential fact--the struggle for peace, democracy and Socialism!

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